

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CIVAIR: BELGIAN NEWSPAPERS COMMENTS

REF: BRUSSELS 8752

1. BELGIAN PRESS HAS BEEN COMMENTING WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY ON PROPOSED LIBATERAL CONSULTATIONS. THE FOLLOWING IS A SELECTION OF COMMENTS REFLECTING IN SOME MEASURE THE ATTITUDES LIKELY TO BE ENCOUNTERED WHEN ACTUAL DISCUSSIONS BEGIN:

HET LAATSTE NIEUWS (MASS-CIRCULATION CONSERVATIVE), NOVEMBER 26, COMMENTS THAT "THE AMERICANS HAVE BADLY CHOSEN THE MOMENT OF DISCUSSION. BELGIUM IS ALSO BEING APPROACHED BY WASHINGTON TO BUY 30 BILLION FRANCS WORTH OF JET FIGHTERS SOON. IT IS NOT DESIRABLE TO DISPLEASE A GOVERNMENT LOOKING WITH ONE EYE TOWARD THE FRENCH MIRAGES. OR WOULD THE INTENTION BE TO MAKE 'CONCESSIONS' TO SABENA IN RETURN FOR THE PURCHASE OF AMERICAN JET FIGHTERS? IT IS A KNIFE THAT CUTS BOTH WAYS."

LE LIBRE BELGIQUE (INFLUENTIAL CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC), NOVEMBER 15: " NO ONE IGNORES THAT TWO GREAT AMERICAN AIRLINES TWO AND PANAM ARE PRESENTLY IN FINANCIAL TROUBLE. ONE WOULD BE INCLINED TO SHOW COMPASSION FOR THEM IF MANNER IN WHICH U.S. GOVT TAKES AT HEART INTERESTS OF ITS BABIES
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WAS NOT HARMFUL TO THOSE OF FOREIGN COMPANIES INCLUDING

OUR SABENA. THE INGENIOUS PROTECTIONISM THAT HAS LONG CHARACTERIZED AMERICAN ATTITUDE IS ONLY GROWING AND FLOURISHING SINCE ACROSS ATLANTIC THEY HAVE BEEN PLUNGED IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES. FOR INSTANCE IN PRESENT CASE U.S. INTENDS TO EXPORT HERE PROBLEMS OF ITS AIRLINES... WE HAVE NEVER BEEN SPOILED IN THE EARONAUTICS FIELD BY OUR FRIENDS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC, EXCEPT WITH PROMISES WHEN WE HAVE TO BUY PLANES FROM THEM. FOR SABENA IS IN FACT ONLY COMPANY WHICH ONLY HAS ONE LANDING POINT IN U.S. ON OTHER HAND WE HAVE PLENTY OF "ASSURANCES" REPEATED YEAR AFTER YEAR..."

GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN (WIDELY READ CATHOLIC), NOVEMBER 15: "ALTHOUGH SABENA HAS AUTHORIZATION TO BRING UNLIMITED NUMBER OF CHARTER PASSENGERS TO U.S., IT HAS NEVER MADE BAD USE OF THAT RIGHT. MOREOVER POSSIBLE BELGIAN SHARE OF NORTH ATLANTIC CAKE WAS CUT AUTOMATICALLY FEW WEEKS AGO BY BANKRUPTCY OF THE POMAIR CHARTER COMPANY... FURTHERMORE ONE CAN HARDLY IMAGINE THAT FOR REGULAR SERVICES BY THE AMERICANS THERE COULD BE OBJECTION TO SABENA WHICH HAS ONLY ONE LANDING PLACE IN U.S..."

HET LAATSTE NIEUWS ALSO STATES NOVEMBER 26: "... A SMALL COMPANY LIKE SABENA, WHICH HANDLES ONLY 1.8 PERCENT OF TRANSATLANTIC TRAFFIC, WILL CERTAINLY NOT CARRY MUCH WEIGHT. CERTAINLY NOT FOR AMERICAN COMPANIES WHICH IN RANGE OF 500 KMS AROUND BRUSSELS HAVE ALL FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT IN ALL EUROPEAN CAPITALS WHEREAS SABENA IS ONLY TOLERATED IN NEW YORK. IT MUST BE POINTED OUT THAT THE AMERICAN AIRLINES COMPANIES WERE THE ONES WHICH HAVE ALSO COMPELLED SABENA, BY A MERCILESS COMPETITION, TO PURCHASE MUCH TOO LARGE 'JUMBOES' WHICH NOW HAVE TO BE FILLED. SABENA IS NOT DOING BADLY IN THIS RESPECT ON THE NEW YORK ROUTE, BE IT WITH FOREIGNERS. WHO CAN FORBID A CLIENT IN THE FREE WEST TO TRAVEL WITH THE AIRLINE COMPANY OF HIS CHOICE?"
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